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TAGS: [EAGR](#) [ECON](#) [TBIO](#) [PGOV](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH KADUNA STATE
GOVERNOR SAMBO

REF: A. ABUJA 286
[1](#)B. 2008 ABUJA 2148

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b
& d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On February 17, Ambassador (accompanied by Poloff notetaker) met with Governor Mohammed Namadi Sambo of Kaduna State (Peoples Democratic Party - PDP). Sambo shared with Ambassador the prevention and mediation programs Kaduna has in place to address ethno-religious conflicts, which have sometimes been a problem in the state. Sambo complained of insufficient funds to accomplish his state's priorities and opined that more of the excess crude account (about 30%) should be distributed to the states. In a discussion of national politics raised by the Ambassador to initiate a discussion on the potential for a coup in today's Nigeria, Sambo said that Nigeria's leadership is finally out of the hands of the military and because of this the sense of civilian authority prevails because of what former President Obasanjo did. He said that President Yar'Adua is an educated president who accepts criticism. On Yar'Adua's health, Sambo said that the President is "a healthy man", but "not superman" and does have health issues he watches. Sambo said that debating Yar'Adua's health is a political tactic used by his opponents to discredit the President. In addition, the Governor outlined his vision for State security, health care education, agriculture, and infrastructure. Ambassador recommended that the Governor send a representative to the Mission's anti-corruption working group on databases and automated records. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) On February 17, Ambassador traveled to Kaduna for the presentation of 150 bicycles donated by the USG to the Nigerian Police Force, concluding a Community Policing project which began in 2004. Kaduna State Governor Mohammed Namadi Sambo joined Ambassador at the event after their meeting in his office. (FYI: Governor Sambo was elected in 2007 on the PDP platform. He is an architect and businessman. End FYI.) The Governor told Ambassador that he is bringing back a sense of federalism and that states must take responsibility for their development.

[1](#)3. (SBU) When asked about efforts to prevent ethno-religious conflicts in his state, Sambo said that Kaduna has "sorted out that problem." He told Ambassador that Kaduna has

inter-religious committees and special advisors to prevent and mediate conflict. He added that when conflict arose in Jos, the Kaduna branch of the Christian Association of Nigeria and local Muslim organizations made announcements that they had "nothing to do with Jos." Sambo said that he is not concerned about the length of time someone has lived in Kaduna and that if "you live in Kaduna for one day, you are a citizen of Kaduna." (Comment: Our local staff from the area confirm that the tensions over who is an "indigene" and who a "settler," which were a major part of recent violence in Jos, seem to be less of a problem for the moment in Kaduna than was the case some years ago. End Comment.)

¶4. (C) In response to Ambassador's inquiry on what the Governor thought should be done with the excess crude account, Sambo said that the point is to save the money for a rainy day and that it is now "pouring." He said that at least 30% should be used to support states which are in debt and 20% should be used to augment the budget.

¶5. (C) Ambassador asked what Sambo thought about coup potentials in Nigeria today, and if he could provide an assessment on President Yar'Adua's health. Sambo noted on the first point that Nigeria's leadership is finally out of the hands of the military in large measure due to the efforts by former President Obasanjo (OBJ). He noted that OBJ could have chosen a retired military officer to be the successor for Nigeria but did not do that. Instead he supported the candidacy of President Yar'Adua. He opined that as an educated individual, President Yar'Adua accepts criticism. He rebuffed the notion that Nigeria should be seeing more

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rapid change, saying that the natural process is to crawl, then walk, then run and that previous damage must be corrected before moving forward. Sambo claimed that the President is "a healthy man", but cautioned that he is "not superman". He said that debating Yar'Adua's health is a political tactic used by his opponents (to discredit the President).

¶6. (U) The Governor's Vision for His State:

-- Security: The Governor asserted that other goals cannot be achieved without security, so it is the top priority in Kaduna State and the first point on Sambo's Eleven-Point Agenda. The Governor said that a security task force launched in January 2008, dubbed "Operation Yaki" (Note: Yaki is a Hausa word meaning "war". End Note.), has proven successful - he claimed that crime along Abuja Road has been reduced by 80%. The task force has procured more than 130 patrol vehicles, 250 motorcycles, and 20 horses. The police vehicles have been equipped with GPS systems, a community watch has been set up, and a helicopter is available for quick response. Sambo said that 2,000 people make up the operation's work-force (of which 85% are police and 15% are military and other security agencies). The State pays these security officials daily allowances of 600-1,000 Naira (\$4-7) a day and provides fuel on a daily basis to the 14 vehicles which patrol Abuja Road. (Note: Operation Yaki vehicles and personnel were visible both within the city of Kaduna and patrolling for several kilometers along the road toward Abuja. End Note.) Sambo said that the lack of training for security personnel is the main problem in implementing security programs. He also said Kaduna needs help in the area of forensics. Ambassador said that forensics is an area where we can help; she suggested that the Governor send a representative to the Mission's anti-corruption working group on databases and automated records.

-- Health Care: Kaduna State provides free prenatal care and medical services for children under the age of five. The Governor claimed that 1.5 million people have benefited from the services and that 2,800 free cesarean births have been performed. Sambo said that 60% of patients' ills are

malaria-related so the state has launched a program to distribute drugs and treated nets and sanitize the environment to kill mosquitoes. In 2008, the State spent \$60 million on the program, but due to economic constraints spending will be cut in half for 2009. Kaduna State invested 4 billion Naira (about \$27 million) to build a 200 bed hospital for which the state is now seeking a company to equip and run. Sambo said that Kaduna also lacks medical professionals so the State has invested in new medical schools and is requiring each local government authority (LGA) to sponsor one person for medical training. A second nursing school in Kaduna was recently established and will start training students this year. However, Sambo said that they need five nursing schools to address the State's needs.

-- Education: Governor Sambo acknowledged the importance of education. Kaduna is encouraging the education of its young people by providing free uniforms and books for primary school students. In addition, Sambo said he increased teachers' salaries - paying them 5% more than their counterparts in other states, and paying special allowances for teaching extra lessons. As a result Sambo claimed that Kaduna students moved from being ranked between 15th-20th to second place on the national exams, following Lagos. Sambo told Ambassador that four additional science-focused secondary schools have been funded by the Islamic Development Bank, which paid \$18 million. The Governor explained that there are more than 3,500 primary schools in Kaduna State but that despite the available classrooms, class is not always in session because of a lack of teachers. He blamed the situation on the high price of housing in the towns where the schools are located. Therefore, he wants to build housing for teachers at the schools.

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-- Agriculture: About 90% of the people in Kaduna State are farmers. But, given the climate many people are only able to farm in the wet season. Therefore, Sambo said the State is completing a study and creating plans for 60 irrigation systems (11 of which will be hydro-electric) to expand the farming season. He expects the study to be finished in July and said that the Chinese will likely fund the project. Recently, three silos were completed and there are plans to build a silo in each LGA.

-- Infrastructure: Regarding the electricity supply, Sambo said the Gurara hydro-electric power plant will be completed in July and that the State government is developing a fuel oil plant in the city of Kaduna. The State reintroduced a passenger train service which now runs within the city of Kaduna, and which the State plans eventually to connect with Abuja. The train provides affordable transportation and free service to transport perishable foods (thereby reducing the price of food in the markets). Kaduna State is also planning the "New Kaduna Millennium City". The community is planned along side the existing city of Kaduna and the Governor said they anticipate the new city to include a golf course, a resort (with a polo field that has already been built), a shopping center, 18,000 new homes, a train station, and the new hospital.

¶7. (C) Comment: Although the Governor's development plans seem rather lofty and we note that they include at least one apparent white-elephant project (the "New Kaduna Millennium City"), his administration has made progress toward achieving some of the goals in Sambo's Eleven-Point Agenda which could affect the average state resident. Improvements in health care, education and agriculture will go a long way to increasing stability and public satisfaction in the state.

¶8. (C) Comment Continued. Like his counterpart in Sokoto (Ref. A), Governor Sambo was quick to claim that the tensions which previously led to religious conflict in his state (back in 2000-2002) have now been resolved. While Christians and Muslims are reported to be reintegrating within the city of

Kaduna (Ref. B), and interfaith mediation groups there are doing good work, Post believes this is at best a tenuous peace which will require continuing effort if future clashes are to be avoided. We note, for example, that Kaduna was one of the places where security forces were quickly deployed when word spread of the fighting in Jos. End Comment.

19. (U) This cable was coordinated with Consulate Lagos.
SANDERS